

The Problem of the Public Schools

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THE PROBLEM OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By R. H. TAWNEY

THE recent appointment by the President of the Board of Education of a Committee on Public Schools is something of a landmark in educational history. The majority of those schools, as is explained below, are already in receipt of grant-aid from the State, and comply with the obligations which that position imposes. But the popular conception of a public school has been derived from the characteristics of select specimens of the genus. As a consequence, the leading representatives of the public school system—to use the conventional, though question-begging, phrase—and the preparatory schools serving them, have been commonly regarded as forming a closed world. Their influence and prestige made it probable that interference with them would encounter tenacious opposition. The minute fraction of the rising generation which attends such schools, and the urgency of other educational requirements, caused reformers for long to doubt whether it was worth while to interfere.

The number of pupils¹ in grant-aided secondary schools on March 31, 1938, was 470,003. The number in schools represented on the Headmasters' Conference, which includes the great majority of schools covered by the inquiries of the Public Schools Committee is stated² by the President of the Board of Education to be 64,700, of whom 26,500 are in independent schools, and 38,200 in schools receiving grant. It is obvious, therefore, that it is on the quality of the schools aided by the State that the future of English secondary education primarily depends. The enlargement of the secondary system, which is promised in the White Paper on *Educational Reconstruction* adds force to that statement. To permit attention to be distracted from the urgent task of improving the standards and status of these schools—which, since they serve the public, are the real public schools—would be a disastrous error.

It remains true, nevertheless, that the questions raised by the position of the small group of schools conventionally, if somewhat misleadingly³ described as “public schools” are not without importance. The institutions in question exercise on English life, including English educational policy, an influence out of proportion to the number of pupils educated in them. The disposition to ignore them was never, therefore, justified. It was as short-sighted as would have been, in the fifties of last century, an apathy which left the older

¹ The number of boys was 247,389. ² June 25, 1942.

³ See *Public Schools and the Future* (Headmasters' Conference, August, 1943), p. 3:—“The term ‘Public Schools’ is canonised by long usage; but it is not a clear or satisfactory expression. If it means anything, it means those schools which are represented on the G.B.A. (Governing Bodies Association) and the Headmasters' Conference. . . . In common usage, when people speak of the Public Schools, they generally mean the independent boarding-schools; and it is really these schools the future of which is a matter of debate.”

Universities un-reformed, on the ground that the undergraduates in both together numbered under four thousand. To-day the financial independence of the better known among the schools concerned, which made possible, if it did not excuse, that attitude of indifference, is no longer so secure as it appeared in the past. The fall in the birth-rate has hit some of them hard.¹ The improvement, both in quality and quantity, of public secondary education has exposed them to keener competition. War taxation has cut into family resources, which might, in other circumstances, have been spent on education. Some parents, perhaps many parents, who would formerly have contrived, if with difficulty, to send their boys to boarding-schools, no longer feel justified in incurring the heavy costs involved; while others, who look beyond the circumstances of the moment to the post-war situation, feel doubts whether the day when education in an expensive boarding-school was regarded as socially indispensable may not have passed for good. As a consequence, the governing bodies of some public schools are faced already, and those of some others may be faced in the near future, by a problem of declining numbers. It is natural that educational institutions, which believe that they are doing work of public value, should seek, in an unforeseen emergency, the assistance of the State. It is proper that the State, whatever the final verdict on their request, should give it serious consideration.

The particular occasion which dragged the public schools into the limelight was, therefore, a financial one.² That aspect of the subject is, clearly, important, but it is only one aspect. It would be a misfortune if the discussion of the future of such schools were conducted merely or mainly on the financial plane. It is not only that grants of public money can hardly be unconditional, and that the conditions which must accompany them can be settled only after a decision as to the educational services required of their recipients. It is that, quite apart from the immediate embarrassments which have caused the question to be raised, a thorough investigation into the rôle of the public schools, of the relations which should exist between them and other parts of the educational system, and of the changes, if any, acquired to ensure that they make their full contribution to the educational life of the nation, is long overdue. Now that practical considerations have forced the issue to the front, an examination of the position and functions of different types of public school, in the absence of which an intelligent verdict on the desirability of assisting those not receiving State aid can hardly be given, ought not to be further postponed. The terms of reference of the Committee, which require it "to consider means whereby the association between the public schools . . . and the general educational system of the country could be developed and extended," are a recognition of

¹ For figures, see *Education and the Birth-Rate. A Social Dilemma*, by Grace G Leybourne and Kenneth White, pp. 335-336, where two alternative estimates are given of the probable decline in the future population of residential public schools.

² The possibility of widening the access to the public schools had, however, been considered by the Headmasters' Conference shortly after the last War. See *The Journal of Education*, Sept., 1941 (article by Sir Frank Fletcher on *Public Schools and the Future*, p. 10).

that fact. Policies, however, cannot usefully be discussed, except in the light of the facts to which they are to be applied. What was a "public" school? What was the number of such schools in existence on the eve of the War? What, in respect of mere externals—school population, boarding and day; fees; grant-aid or the absence of it—were their salient characteristics?

I.—THE DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM.

No legal definition of a public school appears to exist. The Public Schools Commission of 1861-64 dealt only with nine schools, but recognised that beyond them lay a mixed multitude of institutions, many of which were anxious to enjoy the same status and title, and a considerable number of which have since made good that claim. The feature emphasised as characteristic of a public school in the Report issued in 1932 by the Departmental Committee on Independent Schools is their conduct "by Governing Bodies under Trusts or other Articles of Association which limit or prevent profit." In practice, the test by which it is decided whether a particular school is or is not a "public" school is an empirical one. It depends on the answer to the question whether such a school is a member, or not, of the Head Masters' Conference. That body, which was founded in 1896, has, in addition to its other functions, supplied a criterion by which the authentic public schools can be distinguished from the mere pretenders to the title. The schools in the United Kingdom belonging to it have increased by between three- and four-fold since its establishment, from 50 in 1871 to 113 on the eve of the last war, and to 187 in 1938. The figures given below are those for 1938. They relate to public schools for boys in England only, and do not include those in Wales and Scotland. The following table¹ attempts to set out the facts, so far as it has been possible to ascertain them, with regard to the 161 English public schools then in existence, in the matter of number of pupils, boarding and day; grant-aid; special

¹ I am indebted for the figures contained in this table, as well as for other assistance, to Mr. V. Ogilvie, of the New Education Fellowship. The principal materials used in compiling it are the list of secondary schools recognised as efficient by the Board in 1938, *The Public Schools Year-Book*, 1939; Truman and Knightley's *Schools*, 1939; and Burrows' *Schools of England*, 1939. The Board's list omits eleven schools in England represented at the Head Masters' Conference, presumably on the ground that they did not accept inspection by the Board. These schools have been included in the table. The table omits two schools of an exceptional kind, viz., Dartmouth Royal Naval College and Worcester College for the Blind. The total number of pupils over 11 in the 150 schools included in the Board's list for 1938-39 is 64,388. For the remaining eleven schools represented in the table the only published information available appears to be that given in the work of Truman and Knightley. The figures contained in it are given in round numbers, and include in some half a dozen cases boys under eleven. They total 3,900. As mentioned above, the president of the Board stated on June 25, 1942, in answer to a question in the House, that the number of pupils in schools represented on the Headmasters' Conference was 64,700, of whom 26,500 were in independent schools, and 38,200 in grant-aided schools. The Committee on Public Schools is concerned with schools which are members of the Head Masters' Conference and of the Governing Bodies' Association. Only schools which are members of the former are included in the table here given.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND, 1938

	No. of Schools Boarding & Day	No. of Pupils, Boarding and Day	No. of Schools receiving grant	Special Places	Age of Admission	Schools admitting pupils at
						Schools having a junior
						Schools not admitting pupils
4	Schools admitting boarders only	Total No. of pupils	No. of day-pupils	Schools not receiving grant	Schools receiving grant	Schools admitting day-pupils only
						Schools requiring L.E.A.'s.
						Schools not on grant list but approved for supernumerary places
I.	Schools admitting boarders only	No. of boarders	%	Schools receiving grant	Schools required to offer special places	No. wholly or partly remitted as a result of fees
						No. wholly or partly remitted as a result of fees
						No. wholly or partly remitted as a result of fees
II.	Schools admitting day-pupils and day-pupils boarders	No. of day-pupils	%	Schools receiving grant	Schools receiving grant	No. wholly or partly remitted as a result of fees
						No. wholly or partly remitted as a result of fees
						No. wholly or partly remitted as a result of fees
III.	Schools charging fees below £100.	No. of pupils	%	Schools receiving grant	Schools receiving grant	No. wholly or partly remitted as a result of fees
						No. wholly or partly remitted as a result of fees
						No. wholly or partly remitted as a result of fees
IV.	Schools charging no fees	No. of pupils	%	Schools receiving grant	Schools receiving grant	No. wholly or partly remitted as a result of fees
						No. wholly or partly remitted as a result of fees
						No. wholly or partly remitted as a result of fees
TOTAL	161	23	105	33	68,288	27,564 40.3
					40,724	60.7
					66	511
					30	14
					80	12,135
					58	57
					35	11

¹ Including one school receiving grant on a lower scale, and not required to offer special places, though, in fact, it contained 21, out of 380, pupils whose fees had been wholly or partially remitted.

² The figures in this column do not include scholarships or remissions of fees other than those resulting from the grant of special places.

and free places; fees¹ and age² of admission.

It will be seen that the popular view that all or most public schools belong to one type, and that that type is represented by Eton, Harrow or Winchester, is an illusion. In reality, those schools do not form a single category, but, in certain important respects, differ somewhat widely from each other. Some receive only boarders, some only day-pupils, some both day-pupils and boarders. Some depend, to a greater or less extent, on public money; others are financed entirely from fees *plus* endowments. Some admit pupils between eleven and twelve, others not before thirteen. Some draw a considerable proportion of their pupils from public elementary schools; others are almost completely divorced from the national system of education. The most striking fact, however, is one which would have been expected. It is that these varying characteristics are not distributed at random between different public schools, but that certain of them are normally found in combination with others, and that their presence or absence is closely related to the level of fees charged, which, in turn, is a rough index of the economic position of the families from which pupils are predominantly drawn.

The majority of schools in Group III, with boarding fees under £100, differ little, if at all, from those grant-aided secondary schools—the great majority—which do not aspire to be regarded as public schools. None of them take boarders only; over nine-tenths of their pupils are day-boys; 65 out of the 70 schools concerned are in receipt of grant, and offer special places; nine-tenths of those pupils attending public schools whose fees are wholly or partially remitted as a result of the award of special places are found in this group of schools. In all these respects the schools in Group I, which charge boarding fees of £150 and over, differ sharply from those in Group III. None of them admit day-pupils only; eighteen admit only boarders; and, while nineteen admit boarders and day-pupils, the latter form less than one-tenth of the total population of the schools in the group. None of these schools receives grant,³ or is required to offer special places. Group II is the most miscellaneous of the three. Some of the schools contained in it are hardly, if at all, distinguishable from those in Group III, and others are similar in type to those in Group I. The most significant feature of Group II is, perhaps, that, while over 40 per cent of the pupils covered by it are day-pupils, less than one-third of the schools in it receive grant or are required to admit special place pupils.

In the light of these facts, the public schools which call first for consideration can be roughly sorted out. They are those in Group I, together with something over one-half of the schools in Group II.

¹ The fees given in the table are boarding fees. The average boarding and day fees were as follows:

	Average boarding-fee of schools taking boarders	...	Average day-fee of schools taking day-boys
I.	£169-£170	...	£63-£64
II.	£121-£122	...	£37-£38
III.	£82-£83	...	£21-£22

² The figures relating to the age of admission are unreliable, and almost certainly contain more or less serious errors.

³ Three of these schools are approved for purposes of superannuation.

They form, it will be observed, less than half the total number of public schools in England; but their example has had an influence on the social outlook and educational methods of schools outside their own ranks. If more space is devoted in the following pages to the residential schools than to the day-schools, the reason is not that the former are more important than the latter, or that the defects criticised below are found only in them. It is that they present the more difficult problem.

II.—THE LEGACY OF THE LAST CENTURY.

If the nature of that problem is to be understood, it must be seen in perspective. It may be observed, in the first place, that the view sometimes heard that "the public school system" is hallowed by antiquity is a piece of mythology. Of the 161 schools included in the table given above, 59 came into existence¹ in the nineteenth century or later, and 41 of these, including some of the best known, after 1849; while, of the 102 established before 1800, none, of course, were founded as public schools in the modern sense of that expression, and the majority have undergone drastic reconstructions. Particular institutions can point to links with the past of somewhat the kind as exist between the city companies of to-day and mediæval craft-gilds. These pedigrees, dignified or picturesque, are not without their educational value; but a long boarding-school tradition does not often form part of them.² In reality, the assumption still prevalent among well-to-do parents in England—an assumption not countenanced³ by the most eminent of the founders of modern public school education—that residence for four or five years at a boarding school should form, as a matter of course, a stage in the life of all boys above a certain income level, together with the existence of a group of schools which specialise in catering for that demand, are, on anything like their present scale, a thing of yesterday. Individual specimens both of the attitude and of the institution are to be encountered much earlier; but "the public school system," in so far as these are its characteristics, has no long history behind it. It represents, in its present form, not an ancient educational tradition, but innovations which matured between 1830 and 1890.⁴

The reasons which made these two generations the golden age of the public boarding-school are not difficult to state. The moral authority and practical example of pioneers, such as Arnold and Thring, were of great importance; but conditions peculiar to their day

¹ The dates of the foundation of schools are taken from *The Public Schools Year-Book* for 1938.

² "In every case, except those of Merchant Taylors and St. Paul's, and perhaps Shrewsbury, the bulk of each school, as now existing, is an accretion upon the original foundation, and consists of boarders received by masters or other persons at their own expense and risk."—Report of Commission on Public Schools and Colleges, 1864, Vol. I, p. 8, and Vol. III, pp. 502-3.

³ A. P. Stanley, *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold* (Minerva Library ed.), pp. 72-3.

⁴ The proportion of day-boys to boarders in the sixties seems to modern eyes surprisingly high. The figures below are taken partly from the Report of the Commission on Public Schools, partly from that of the Schools' Inquiry Commission, 1868, Vol. I, App. VI, pp. 150 and 322. Some of them appear to be

fixed the direction of their efforts, and it is no reflection on their originality to say that, even more than most successful reformers, they worked with the grain. Apart from the influence of individuals, the decisive factors were four. They were the Industrial Revolution, with its flood of new wealth; the deficiencies, both in number and quality, of existing day-schools; the modernisation of communications; and the careers opened by the expansion of the empire, the reform of the civil service and the growth of the professions. The first greatly increased the effective demand for high secondary education. The second and third put a premium on boarding-schools and made recourse to them practicable. The fourth ensured that the aptitudes cultivated by them would find little difficulty, when school-days were over, in securing suitable employment.

The rising middle class, if often uneducated itself, was not unaware of the advantages of education; nor was it lacking in ambition. It looked to the schools to provide, in addition to a moral and intellectual discipline, a common platform enabling its sons to associate on equal terms with those of families who, if increasingly out-distanced in income, still diffused a faint aroma of social superiority. At first, it looked in vain. The old local foundations were often in ruins. The local secondary schools of today were not yet even a dream. The condition of not a few private schools was such that the choice, parents were told by one with some title to speak, "lies between public schools and an education whose character may be strictly . . . domestic."¹ If they rejected the last course, what alternative had they but to send their sons to schools at a distance from their homes? Yet how, in the days when Arnold himself travelled to his new post at Rugby by stage-coach, and despatched his belongings by the Grand Junction Canal, could the first alternative be generally adopted?

The answer came, not from the educationalist, but from the engineer. It is not an accident that the boarding-school boom followed closely on a railway boom, that three times as many public schools

merely estimates. The discrepancy between the total of 2,673 given below for the nine public schools and that of 2,696 given in the Report is due to uncertainty as to the Eton figures.

	Boarders	%	Day-Boys	%	Total
Nine Public Schools (end of 1861)	1,952	73·0	721	26·9	2,673
572 Endowed Schools (1868) ...	9,279	25·1	27,553	74·8	36,832
Proprietary Schools (1867) ...	15,831	30·7	35,674	69·2	51,505

The nine great public schools included in 1861 two schools, St. Paul's and Merchant Taylors, which were entirely day-schools. It will be noticed that day-boys then formed 26·9 per cent of the boys in the nine schools, as compared with 7 per cent in the thirty-seven most expensive schools in 1938, and that they accounted in 1867 for over two-thirds of the aggregate population of all schools together. Between 1840 and 1867 several boarding-schools (e.g., Marlborough, Wellington, Malvern, Rossall, Cheltenham, Clifton, Lancing, Radley) were founded, and several local grammar schools were reconstructed so as to make them available for a non-local *clientèle*. It is probable that, if figures for 1840 were available, they would show a substantially higher proportion of day-boys. In the present century, the proportion of day-boys attending public schools has again increased, owing to the increase in the number of day-schools belonging to the Head Masters' Conference.

¹ A. P. Stanley, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

were founded in the thirty years between 1841 and 1871 as in the whole century before 1871, and that enterprising grammar schools made haste to fall in with the fashion, sometimes placating their consciences for the diversion of their services from day-boys to boarders by supporting cheap day-schools for the sons of local residents. A form of education which improved communications made possible was made increasingly attractive by the requirements of a state beginning tardily to grapple with the problems of an empire and an urban civilisation. The establishment in 1854 of open competition as the condition of entry to the Indian Civil Service, the application of the same principle to the Home Civil Service between 1855 and 1870, and the gradual assumption by governments of functions demanding an enlarged administrative *personnel*, combined with the growth of law, medicine and business to create a market in which, before the days of municipal and county secondary schools, the products of the public schools for long met few competitors. Parents with means were quick to grasp the advantages of the new dispensation. It could be said by a headmaster in the early seventies not only that "the ordinary English gentleman would think that he lost caste" if he did not send his boy to a public school, but that "there is a strong feeling growing up among the merchant class in favour of the public schools, and (that) hundreds go to a school now who, thirty years ago, would not have thought of doing so."¹ Every stage of education casts its influence back, for good or evil, on that preceding it. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first preparatory school of the modern type should have been founded, apparently, on the suggestion of Arnold. The increase in the number of such schools from something under a score in the sixties to approximately four hundred² in 1900 supplied the public boarding-schools with a *clientèle* of the social type which they desired, educated under conditions not dissimilar from their own. It is a commonplace that England possesses, not one educational system, but two—a public and a private one. At the close of the century, the former was still in an early stage of its history; the latter was not far from complete.

The "public school system" of today, therefore, in so far as it is represented by the great boarding-schools, is not among the more venerable of the historic treasures of the English people. It grew to maturity between the first and third Reform Acts, as the child of a particular age and a specific environment. Like the reorganisation of local government and the changes which followed the first Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge, it was one phase of the great movement of middle-class reconstruction which began in 1832, reached its climax in the eighties, and then, its impetus spent, settled down to make the most of the kingdom it had won, leaving, as was inevitable, new tasks to be essayed by novel methods and in a spirit

¹ G. P. Parkin, *Edward Thring, Life, Diary and Letters*, II., pp. 195-196.

² J. Dover Wilson, *The Schools of England*, chapter on "The Preparatory School," by Alan Rannie, p. 65. According to Leybourne and White, *op. cit.*, p. 190, "During 1936-37 there were in England and Wales 272 boys' preparatory schools recognised by the Board, with 17,785 pupils, of whom 11,493 were boarders, while 6,292 attended daily. Here, day-boys on the average paid no less than £35 7s. each year in fees, while boarders paid as much as £148 10s."

not its own. No student of English life in the latter half of the last century will question the magnitude of the improvements in the education of the propertied and professional classes which were gathering way. No fair-minded critic, whatever his own sympathies, will depreciate the beneficial effects which those improvements produced, not only on those who directly experienced them, but on the nation as a whole. The most enlightened of reformers, however, must work with the materials to his hand; and the public boarding-schools, whether reconstituted or newly founded, took, for good and for evil, the stamp of their day. The better among them owed much, and added much, to the practical energy, the admirable moral seriousness, the respect for the hard grind of the intellect, without fancies or frills, of Victorian England. All of them, including the best, were impoverished by the feebleness of the social spirit of the same England. All of them were the victims of its precipitous class divisions, its dreary cult of gentility, its inability to conceive of education as the symbol and cement of a spiritual unity transcending differences of birth and wealth.

Two features of the period, in particular, condemned those schools to a position which they could hardly, at the time—even had they wished it—have avoided, but which later were to prove both mischievous to the nation and humiliating to them. Since no public system of education existed, in which they could take their place, they came to form, as they rose in number and influence, a separate order of their own. They developed, not as partners in a community of educational effort, welcoming the obligations which such partnership imposes and zealous to bring their contributions to the common stock, but as the apostles of an exaggerated individualism, which, at first, perhaps, was inevitable, but which survived into an age when it was no longer a necessity forced upon them by the backwardness of public education, but a cherished idiosyncracy. Isolated from what were to be the main streams of the nation's educational life, and flattered by the eminent, they were under strong inducements to become the egoists of the educational world, whose pride in the uniqueness of their excellences was stronger than their eagerness to share them. It cannot be said that they have been notably successful in resisting that temptation. Since, in the second place, there was no question in their seminal period of state grants to secondary education, the public boarding-schools were compelled, unless blessed with endowments, to finance themselves from fees; and their wares, being expensive, had to be sold in a market in which price was a secondary consideration. Here again, at first, they had no alternative; and, here again, till recently, they do not seem to have sought one. Towards the end of the decade of rapid educational development which followed the Act of 1902, it was suggested by a headmaster—now a well-known national figure—that the public schools should accept state-aid and public supervision, in order both to improve the quality of their education and to reduce its cost.¹ It may be doubted whether the

¹ Cyril Norwood and Arthur H. Hope, *The Higher Education of Boys in England*, especially pp. 186-196 and Part III, chap. V, "The Reform of the Public Schools," by H. Lionel Rogers.

Government of the day would have smiled on that proposal; but, while the number of day-schools on the grant-list has steadily increased, and included in 1938 some sixty-five public schools, the public boarding-schools, as far as known to the writer, took at the time no step in that direction. Their social character was already fixed, and history was too strong for them. They had grown up as the servants, not of the nation, but of one small stratum within it. Their pupils, their staffs, their governing bodies, were drawn from a single class. The conversion of a luxury trade for the well-to-do into one supplying a less select *clientèle* is never an easy undertaking. Either the schools concerned did not make the effort, or it proved beyond their power.¹

III.—THE CASE FOR REFORM.

“The public schools,” observed in 1909 Dr. Norwood and Mr. Hope, “generally produce a race of well-bodied, well-mannered, well-meaning boys, keen at games, devoted to their schools, ignorant of life, contemptuous of all outside the pale of their own caste, uninterested in work, neither desiring or revering knowledge. . . . A sound economy of finance would certainly result in a considerable reduction in the cost of a public school training, to the advantage both of the often sorely-taxed parent and of the public schools themselves, since they would gain in usefulness what they lost in exclusiveness.”² There is reason to believe that the intellectual standards of all or most public schools have improved out of recognition in the last thirty years. With higher salary scales, better staffing ratios, and a more ample provision of amenities, than most grant-aided secondary schools have been in a position to afford, they have been able to offer an education at once more intensive and more diversified than has hitherto been practicable in the majority of the latter. Good judges, for example the Master of Balliol,³ have paid tribute to the high quality of their educational work. It is probable that, were the authors of *Higher Education in England* writing today, their strictures on the mental stagnation of public school boys would be omitted or much modified.

That point should be emphasised, especially by a critic, both on grounds of justice and because it is obviously important that reform, whatever shape it may assume, should not impair educational values, but should preserve them and extend their influence. It cannot be said with equal confidence, however, that the social idiosyncracies of the schools in question have followed the contempt for knowledge into the limbo of the past. On the prevalence of the “caste” spirit,

¹ It is possible that, in more recent times, the fault has been that of the State, rather than of the schools. According to Sir Frank Fletcher (*The Journal of Education*, Sept., 1941), “On more than one occasion representatives of these schools (sc. the leading public schools) have approached the State authorities with suggestions and offers of co-operation, and inquiries as to the possibility of opening wider our doors to boys of all classes—or rather of all degrees of parental wealth or poverty. The question for us has long been not whether this is desirable, but how it can be done.” ² Norwood and Hope, *op. cit.*, pp. 187 and 189.

³ *Picture Post*, 4.1.41. “Their (sc. the public schools’) faults are the result of the class division, but the all-round education they give is of very high quality.”

views, doubtless, will differ, though it is significant that observers from the Dominions and the United States—not to mention Scandinavia and France—are not slow to detect its presence and to lift their eyebrows at it. "Exclusiveness," of which that spirit is the natural product, is a matter, not of opinion, but of fact. It is mitigated, of course, by scholarships and concessions to parents, which, though rarely of benefit to the children of wage-earners, play a valuable part in lightening the educational burdens of middle class families. Subject to that qualification, the select character of the more expensive boarding-schools, which in the eyes of their feeble-minded clients is not the least among their assets, is maintained by a scale of fees¹ which automatically restricts their use to the relatively well-to-do. They are predominantly schools for the sons of parents—before 1939 perhaps 3 per cent² of the population—who can afford to pay £125 to £250 and upwards a year for the education of one child. They are, in fact, public schools from which the children of the great majority of the public are rigorously excluded. In such circumstances, the statement that they are class institutions cannot seriously be contested. The apologist who emphasises the variety of occupational groups represented by the parents sending sons to these schools, and who applauds the liberal spirit which they have shown in admitting the sons of "dentists, bank-managers, and the more successful shop-keepers,"³ is, doubtless, correct. But he confirms, rather than invalidates, the charge of exclusiveness. Approximately three-quarters of the occupied population consist of wage-earners. What proportion do the sons of wage-earners form of the pupils to be found in the more expensive schools? The Committee of the Headmasters' Conference deprecates, in another connection, the creation of "an impassable gulf separating the schools of the wealthy from the schools of the poor."⁴ To the ordinary man who looks at Eton, or Harrow or Winchester, or a dozen other celebrated schools, it is precisely such a gulf that appears to exist today.

Educational policy is always social policy. In the England of the later nineteenth century, when the public school system was in the making, it could plausibly be argued that the recruitment of educational institutions on the basis of wealth, if in itself unedifying, was not out of tune with the temper of the day. In their subservience to money and social position, and the tranquil, unsophisticated class-consciousness which that subservience bred, the public boarding-schools, it might be said, did not rise above the standards of their

¹ On the subject of fees see the statement contained in *Public Schools and the Future* (Headmasters' Conference, August, 1943) pp. 5-6 and 18-19: "The Public Boarding Schools are expensive. Their fees average about £170 a year, and in a few cases go over £200. . . . Undoubtedly much the larger number of places in them are available only for those whose parents can afford to pay. This is wrong from every point of view". It should be added that the pamphlet goes on to explain that the high fees are due, not to expensive standards of living, but to scales of salaries and staffing, and to the costs of maintaining buildings.

² "In 1935 only 4 per cent of personal incomes in the U.K. exceeded £500 per annum, while incomes above £1,000 represented . . . 1·55 per cent of the population." (Leybourne and White, *op. cit.* p. 204.)

³ *The Political Quarterly*, July-September, 1943.

⁴ *Public Schools and the Future* (Headmasters' Conference, August, 1943), p. 27.

generation, but neither did they fall below them. Their virtues were genuine and their own; their vices were of a piece with those of the society about them. Whether convincing, or not, in the past, that defence is clearly out of date.

Since the public school system assumed its present shape, England has become a political democracy. The public boarding-schools continue to serve much the same tiny class as in the days when Lord Balfour was at Eton and Lord Baldwin at Harrow. A national system of education has not only been created in the interval, but has revealed un-anticipated possibilities of growth, and is now on the eve of the fourth chapter in its history. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that, as far as the contact with it of the great majority of the public boarding-schools goes, it might as well not exist.¹ Institutions so immune to the stresses and demands of a changing environment may enjoy some of the advantages of an old régime, but they suffer also from its weaknesses. It is not primarily a question of the attitude of headmasters, or even of governing bodies; for representative figures among the former have expressed themselves strongly, if with reservations, in favour of reform, and the latter, however opaque their prejudices, could not prevent it, once it had become the national policy. It is a question of the reluctance of a small, but influential, class to acquiesce in interference with institutions which it has come to regard as peculiarly its own; of its fears of the keener competition for posts of profit and distinction which will result from a diminution of educational inequalities; of a temper which values the more exclusive public schools, not only as organs of culture, but as instruments of power; of public indifference; of the refusal of Governments, for each and all of these reasons, to take a thorny subject up. As a consequence, the public boarding-schools have been permitted to live in isolation from the educational needs of the mass of the population and from the system which serves them. What are the results of that policy?

(1) Its first result is obvious. The rising generation is submitted in youth to a somewhat rigid system of educational segregation, which is also a system of social segregation. Whether Disraeli's famous epigram is still applicable or not to the adult population, it certainly remains true of the young, though, thanks to the development of public education, it is less true than in the recent past. Given the existing economic order, sharp class divisions exist independently

¹ The body best qualified to express an opinion on that point is the Association of Education Committees. Its verdict (*Education*, Dec. 25, 1942, p. 585) is as follows: "It is a common characteristic of both boarding and day (public) schools that they have no present association with the general educational system, and that they profess to make, and do in fact make, educational provision for a small section of the community. Internally their organisation and the character of their community life reflect the exclusiveness which necessarily flows from these qualities. Their external relationships are similarly affected in that they have no organic, and little informal, relationship with the general educational provision of the locality in which they are found. They tend to associate, naturally enough having regard to their circumstances, with the section of the community for which they cater and also with those who are highly placed in church and state, the professions, and the business world, to whose ranks they contribute largely and altogether disproportionately."

of educational organisation and policy. It is unreasonable, therefore, to speak of the public boarding-schools as creating them. But education ought to be a solvent of such divisions. It is difficult to deny that the tendency of those schools is to deepen and perpetuate them. "The very existence of the public schools, as they now are," writes Mr. Simpson, himself formerly a master at one of them, "helps to keep the different social classes ignorant of one another, and aggravates misunderstanding to an extent which public school men commonly do not realise."¹ Is it possible convincingly to challenge that criticism?

There is something to be said for preserving some schools only loosely connected with the national educational system, on the ground that their existence is favourable to initiative, experiment, and diversity of educational type. There is nothing whatever to be said for preserving schools whose distinctive characteristic is that they are recruited almost exclusively from the children of parents with larger incomes than their neighbours. That infliction on the young of the remorseless rigours of the economic calculus is mischievous for two reasons. It is unfair to them, and it is injurious to society. Children learn from each other more than the most skilful of masters can teach them. Easy, natural and un-selfconscious contacts between young people of varying traditions and different social backgrounds are not the least valuable part of their education. They are not only a stimulating influence in youth, but the best preparation for an attitude which makes the most of life in later years. An educational system which discourages them is, to that extent, not a good system, but a bad one. The predominantly one-class school is not favourable to them. Not only is an obvious injustice done when children are excluded by financial barriers from the schools in question, but the pupils admitted to them are themselves injured. They are taught, not in words or of set purpose, but by the mere facts of their environment, that they are members, in virtue of the family bank-account, of a privileged group, whose function it will be, on however humble a scale, to direct and command, and to which leadership, influence, and the other prizes of life properly belong. The capacity of youth to protect itself against the imbecilities of its elders is not the least among the graces bestowed on it by Heaven; but that does not excuse us for going out of our way gratuitously to inflict our fatuities upon it. If some of the victims continue throughout life, as unhappily they do, to see the world through class spectacles, a policy which insists on their wearing them at school must bear part of the responsibility. Insolence and servility in the old—the Blimps and the Muffs²

¹ J. H. Simpson, *The Future of the Public Schools*.

² See the letters by Mr. George Muff, M.P., in *The Times* of July 8 and 16, 1943. Their most surprising features were two. The first was the astonishment which the writer appears to have felt, on visiting a group of public schools, at the discovery that "the average normal boy is the same all England over"; the second his plea that "the door (to the public schools) should be at least ajar". Did he really expect public school boys to be less attractive than other boys? And why should the portals of public schools be no more than "ajar" to the sons of the public? It would be difficult to find a more damning comment on the contribution to social misunderstanding made by the organisation of education on lines of social class than is contained in these pathetic effusions by one of its victims.

—may well be incurable, and are a subject for pity rather than for indignation. But why persist in transmitting the bacilli to the young?

Nor, of course, is it only individuals who suffer from our erection of educational snobbery into a national institution. The nation, as a whole, pays a heavy price for it. The complicated business of democratic government demands, with the world as it is, a high capacity for co-operation; and co-operation, in its turn, depends on mutual understanding. A common educational background fosters such understanding. An organisation of education which treats different sections of the population as though they belonged to different species is an impediment to it. It is precisely such a treatment which is our present practice. Its effects on public life are heightened, of course, by other factors, but they remain only too visible.

The higher ranges of the British Civil Service have many virtues. What too frequently they lack is not intelligence, or expert knowledge, or public spirit, or devotion to duty. It is personal experience of the conditions of life and habits of thought of those for whose requirements in the matter of health, housing, education and economic well-being, they are engaged in providing. That deficiency is serious. Yet how, as long as the schools attended by a somewhat high proportion of the individuals concerned are schools which no common child can enter, can they be blamed for suffering from it? There is no reason to suppose that the *personnel* of the British diplomatic service does not possess the same virtues in abundance. If, nevertheless, some of its members surprise friendly foreign observers by their inability to mix on easy terms with any but small cliques, the reason is partly the same. It is commonly not, as their exasperated critics are apt to complain, that they are swollen with British arrogance, but that they have been immolated in youth on the altar of good form. They have breathed at school the close atmosphere of a social sect, whose conventions they have learned to regard as the right thing. Too often they continue to mistake the provincialisms of a class for the interests and manners of civilised mankind. The mood of nervous defensiveness revealed by some, though, of course, not by all, of the spokesmen of the public boarding-schools at the prospect of a large influx of pupils of a different stamp—as though these harmless young people were a species of sub-boy, some few of whose members can be domesticated, but most are to be shunned—is a third illustration, at once comic and sad, of the artificial ignorance engendered by our educational divisions. Must we really regard as the last word in wisdom arrangements which cause able and amiable men to shrink in alarm from contact with their fellow-countrymen?

The co-existence of a public and a private educational system is not without influence on Parliament itself. It causes the economic lines¹ between parties to coincide in large measure with educational lines. Such a coincidence is on all grounds unfortunate. It means that education, which should be the great uniter, becomes itself a ground of division, and that not a few members, even when they themselves have no interest at stake, approach questions of impor-

¹ Instructive figures on this point will be found in *Parliamentary Representation*, by J. F. S. Ross, chap. V.

tance to the mass of their fellow-countrymen in a spirit, if not of hostility, of insolent indifference, which would hardly be possible had they and their opponents rubbed shoulders at school up to sixteen or eighteen. That spirit is apt to be seen at its worst when education itself is under discussion. Members who have served on Local Education Authorities can usually be relied on, irrespective of party, to show sense and good feeling; they have seen the children and succumbed to them. Too many of the remainder—to judge by their behaviour—find it difficult to believe that the children of common persons are human in quite the same sense as their own. They have rarely themselves been educated in schools which are directly affected by parliamentary decisions on educational policy, nor do they often send their sons to them. They can hardly be expected—apart, of course, from bright exceptions—to regard the improvement of those schools as the urgent issue which it is. On any sane view, the preparation of the young for life is among the greatest of common interests. When the economic divisions of the adult world are allowed to reproduce themselves in the educational system, it is difficult for that truism to win general recognition. Thus the evil legacy perpetuates itself.

(2) The resources of character and capacity at the disposal of the nation, though far larger than are utilised at present, are not unlimited. The course of wisdom for it, therefore, is to make certain of turning to the best account as much of both as it commands. It is to encourage an easy movement of ability to the types of education best calculated to cultivate it, and an easy movement, again, from educational institutions to the posts which such ability is qualified to fill. *La carrière ouverte aux talents*—promotion by merit—is neither the sole object of educational policy nor, in the view of the writer, the most important one; but it is clearly an object which should be given its due weight. The immense tasks which confront the nation during the coming generation enhance its significance.

Success in attaining that end depends on the general educational and social policy of a country, not on any particular group of schools. But all schools should co-operate, according to their opportunities, in facilitating its attainment, and none should thwart or ignore it. The existence of schools recruited primarily by an income test obstructs it in two ways. It results, in the first place, in the misdirection of ability. The children of parents of small means, whatever their natural aptitudes for the types of education which the public boarding-schools provide, are prevented by their cost from obtaining access to them. The children of the well-to-do are not infrequently sent to such schools on account of the social prestige which they confer, even when they would benefit more by an education of a different sort. Educational maladjustments of the kind are unjust to individuals and injurious to the nation. They prevent it from making the best use of the talents at its disposal.

The second effect of a system of selection for higher education in which, not merely the personal qualities of the young, but the financial means of their parents, play a determining part, is equally serious. It is unduly to narrow the area from which recruits for posi-

tions of responsibility are drawn in later life. It is sometimes said that the peculiar function of the public boarding-schools is to "educate for leadership," and that the social life which they offer specially fits them for that task. All schools, elementary, secondary, and the particular species of secondary schools called "public," have produced leaders; and it may readily be admitted that, for reasons which are not difficult to state, the last has hitherto contributed more than its fair quota. But, before the claim can be conceded in the form in which it is sometimes advanced, two considerations must be weighed.

In the first place, there is no such thing as leadership in the abstract. The qualities needed by a leader depend on the social environment in which he works, on the nature of the problems that he is called upon to solve, and not least—if his *métier* is government—on the political psychology of those who are to be led. All three have changed profoundly, both at home and abroad, in the last half-century, nor is there any probability that that process will be arrested. The truth is that leadership demands different gifts at different periods, and that no formula for producing it can be other than provisional. There are times—to refer only to politics—when the even-handed justice of an authoritarian government provides an adequate answer to most situations. There are others when a kindly paternalism is less important than the capacity to co-operate, in a spirit of equality, with all sorts and conditions of men, irrespective of differences of class, colour and creed. There are others, again, when a habit of benevolent superiority is a ruinous liability, and when leadership involves an ability to sympathise with popular movements, and a sufficient interest in the economic and technical conditions of social progress to be qualified to play an active part in promoting it. A nation which intends to hold its own in the world must take account of such changing requirements and play to the score. It may well be the case that the characteristics alleged—often, doubtless, with truth—to be fostered by a public boarding-school were a not too inadequate equipment for certain kinds of leadership in the past. But is it so certain that they remain adequate to-day, or that, if they do, a secondary day-school is incapable of cultivating them?¹

In order, in the second place, that an institution may be successful in training leaders, it is not enough that it should provide an educa-

¹ The facts given by the Secretary for War in introducing the Army Estimates on February 19, 1942, do not suggest that, in one department of leadership at any rate, the products of the public schools are markedly superior to those of other schools: "In the intake of officers up to October, there were 24 per cent from some 100 schools which are labelled as Public Schools, and 76 per cent from all the other schools and educational establishments in the country, secondary, elementary and all the rest of them. . . . Candidates were, after considerable testing, separated into four classes—outstanding qualities of leadership, above the average, average, and below the average. For outstanding qualities of leadership the public schools came out with 6 per cent and the rest had 5½ per cent. In Grade B there were 33 per cent from public schools, and 34½ from the rest. . . . Hon. Members will notice that the difference between the public schools and the rest in each of the four classes is very small indeed." (See *The Public Schools and the Educational System*, published by the Workers Educational Association, 1943, p. 7, where the passage is quoted in full.)

tion well suited for that purpose; it is necessary also that it should cast its net wide. The way to pick a strong team of athletes is not to exclude from it everyone with less than £10 a week, but to consider all candidates for inclusion, irrespective of their economic circumstances, and then to choose them on their merits. The way to encourage able leadership whether in scholarship and science, politics or economic life is, in principle, the same. If a school begins by ruling out as ineligible all potential leaders who cannot satisfy an exacting income test, the individuals on whom it lavishes its skill will not be those best qualified to lead, but only—a very different thing—those best qualified among the small minority who alone can comply with that initial requirement. Of course, if it is content merely to count among its old boys men who, for one reason or another, have reached positions of prominence, then money and social influence have hitherto been good horses to back. But that version of the venerable pastime of spotting the winner can hardly be intended, when the public boarding-schools are praised as the nurseries of the nation's leaders.

In reality, education for leadership especially in a democracy, is not a simple matter. It is a question, not only of intensive cultivation, but of a wide range of selection; not only of the education of pupils actually admitted to schools, but of the principles determining the admission of some and the exclusion of others. It is likely to be a success when the right kind of education is easily accessible to those best qualified to profit by it. When such education is surrounded by high financial hedges, the education itself may still be good, but, as an aid to the production of able leadership, it is likely to be a failure. Considered from that point of view, the limitations of the English educational system appear somewhat serious. No adequate statistical evidence¹ exists showing the schools from which persons eminent in different walks of life are drawn; nor in the nature of things, can such evidence be up-to-date. Such scraps of information, however, as are available suggest that Great Britain draws on the capacity of all its citizens to a less degree than do, for example, the United States and the Dominions, and that leadership in politics, administration and finance is recruited—less exclusively, indeed, than in the past, but still predominantly—not from the population as a whole but from the small circle of families—perhaps 3 per cent of the nation—who can afford to pay for an expensive education. In the words of the *Economist*,² “the public schools turn out, perhaps, 10,000 boys a year; from this tiny fraction we select the great majority of those who are to be given an easy road to the top. The selection is clearly not

¹ Statistics of the schools attended by 691 persons eminent in different walks of life in 1926 and 1927, will be found in the writer's *Equality*, App. I. They show that 524 (75·8 per cent) were educated at a public school, and 330 (47·7 per cent) at one or other of fourteen principal public schools. More recent figures of the schools attended by 830 persons eminent in 1939 and 1940 are given in *The Public Schools and the Educational System* (Workers' Educational Association) App. II. It will be realised, of course, that the educational conditions on which such statistics throw light are necessarily those of a generation or more ago, not those of today.

² The *Economist*, Nov. 23, 1940.

one of merit." Here, again, the primary responsibility is less that of the schools concerned than of a public which is at once indulgent to educational privilege and parsimonious in providing for the adequate development of secondary education. The consequences of its attitude are, however, somewhat serious. A nation which permits the continuance of the state of things described by the *Economist* is grappling with its problems with one hand tied behind its back.

(3) If an educational system is to mobilise its full power, it is not sufficient that each of the institutions composing it should make the most of its own virtues without regard to the remainder. It is necessary that all of them should play their varying roles as conscious partners in a common effort. The pedantries of over-organisation are, of course, to be avoided; but so also is a selfish or capricious individualism. There should be a general recognition that, while a good school is a community with distinctive characteristics, every school has responsibilities, not merely to its immediate *clientèle*, but to the nation as a whole; and such a relation should exist between all schools and the State as to ensure that those responsibilities are not ignored. It is not a question of mechanical systematisation, but of co-operation within a framework which finds room for wide diversities of educational type, but ensures that such diversities contribute to the common end of an educated nation.

If, judged by that standard, the public boarding-schools of to-day leave something to be desired, it is history, rather than any wilful perversity, which must be regarded as the culprit. Most of them were firmly established at a time when public education was still in its infancy. But a position of isolation, which was inevitable in the past, is unnecessary to-day, and, being needless, has become mischievous. Unfortunately, it still continues. The schools in question touch the public educational system at its apex, through their connection with the Universities; but, being fed by expensive preparatory schools, they are rarely in touch with its lower ranges. Receiving, in most cases, no grants, they are not subject to the secondary regulations of the Board, and their contacts with it are at present confined to the voluntary acceptance of inspection by its officials. Between them and the Local Education Authorities, with their six million children and quarter of a million or so teachers, direct contacts hardly exist. The team-spirit, which leads individuals to play for their side rather than for themselves, is commonly counted among the public school virtues. It cannot be said that those schools themselves are a shining example of it. Like the Cyclops, "each governs his own children, nor do they trouble about their neighbours."

That state of things is not confined to the public boarding-schools. It is a particular case of the general problem arising from the existence of a multitude of private schools, with which no public authority has power to interfere. Its disadvantages are somewhat serious. If the nation is to make the most effective use of its educational resources, it must be in a position to bring them all under review, and to act on the conclusions which a comprehensive survey suggests. As long as one small group of important schools, and many thousand schools of inferior standing, are completely or predomi-

nantly outside the purview of the Board and the Local Education Authorities, such action is impossible. That situation is unfortunate, whatever the view taken of the merits or demerits of residential education. It is conceivable that the number of boarding-schools is excessive, and that some of them would be of greater service if converted into day-schools. No public authority has power to reduce it, or even to prevent the foundation of additional schools of the same type. It is conceivable, on the other hand, that the number of boarding-schools is deficient, and ought to be increased; but to increase it solely with the purpose of meeting the needs of those children who cannot afford to enter existing schools would be to perpetuate the very cleavage based on wealth which it is important to overcome. Here again, therefore, if an addition to boarding school provision is thought to be desirable, what is needed is to plan that provision as a whole, and to ensure that boys pass to the schools, whether to be established in future or already in existence, for which they are best suited, without their choice being biased by financial considerations. And here, again, no authority exists with power to do anything of the kind. It is clearly desirable, in the second place, that the arrangements as to the admission of pupils to different types of secondary schools should be sufficiently similar not to impose needless obstacles on the entry of boys suited for this type or that. The fact that one group of schools is private, and another public, makes a reasonable measure of cooperation needlessly difficult of attainment. Other things being equal, diversity of social and educational experience in teaching staffs, and the easy movement of teachers between schools of different types, are an asset. Both tend to be discouraged by the same sharp cleavage.

Sympathy is naturally evoked by the claim of schools for freedom to develop each its own special *ethos* and educational methods. Matters of school government and finance, however, including, where they exist, endowments and the management of boarding-houses, stand in a different category. It is not satisfactory that governing bodies should be as heavily weighted as some are at present with decorative notabilities, to the exclusion or under-representation of public education authorities; or that fees and other costs, which are stated by a headmaster¹ to have risen greatly in the course of the last generation, should be subject to no form of public control; or that no public authority should be responsible for seeing that the domestic economy of public boarding-schools—an aspect of school life which is not, after all, the speciality of teachers—is conducted on modern lines, and with reasonable regard to economy and efficiency. It is probable that, as far as matters of this kind are concerned, not only the public, but the schools themselves, have everything to gain from the pressure of a central authority which can pool the experience of a number of different institutions, and correct individual aberrations or laxities by reference to a range of knowledge which no single one of them can command.

¹ "The Future of the Public Schools," by W. F. Bushell, in *The Journal of Education*, November, 1940.

IV.—THE SPECIAL PLACE SYSTEM.

The criticisms made above contain nothing novel. Nearly all of them have been from time to time advanced since, at least, the assumption by the State, in the opening decade of the present century, of the responsibility for creating an efficient system of secondary education. Nor does it appear that the spokesmen of the public boarding-schools themselves are unanimous in rejecting them. Leading headmasters,¹ while emphasising that such schools have an important contribution to make, and that a large measure of freedom is the condition of their making it, have deplored their inaccessibility to boys of small means; have insisted that costs and fees can and should be reduced; and have urged that they "should come to occupy a recognised place within the State system."² A reasonable conclusion from recent discussions of the question would appear to be that the existence of a group of schools reserved for the sons of the well-to-do, and divorced almost completely from the public educational system, whatever its justification in the past, is commonly recognised to be no longer defensible. If that view be accepted, to what policy should it lead?

The tradition of English educational policy is one of reluctant innovation. It handles particular issues piece-meal, when they can no longer be ignored, but has rarely been disposed to consider them in relation to the larger problems of which they form part. The feature of the public boarding-schools which arouses most criticism is their social exclusiveness. It is natural, therefore, that the first proposal to be advanced should be one for mitigating it. The suggestion which hitherto has received most attention is that some version of the special place system, under which, since 1907, secondary schools aided by the State have been required to take a certain percentage of pupils from elementary schools, should be applied to the public boarding-schools. Several headmasters³ have recently advanced the same proposal, and the governing bodies of some schools have approached neighbouring Local Education Authorities with an offer to act on it. It is likely, it may be suspected, to figure

¹ Articles and letters by public school headmasters will be found in the *Journal of Education* for November and December, 1940, and January, 1941.

² *Journal of Education*, November, 1940, letters by C. Russell Scott and W. F. Bushell.

³ The most detailed scheme advanced by headmasters is that contained in *Public Schools and the Future* (Headmasters' Conference, August, 1943). Starting from the premise that "no parent who desires a boarding-school education for his children should be precluded from obtaining it for them merely by inability to pay fees," it suggests, as two alternative methods of attaining that end, either the recognition for direct grant under the Regulations for Secondary Schools of boarding schools or day-and-boarding-schools wishing to apply for it, or the establishment, in the case of schools not desiring recognition, of boarding scholarships tenable at them by boys from public elementary or day secondary schools. It deals at some length with such questions as the age of entry; the area of recruitment; the number of scholarships to be offered; finance; methods of selection; conditions to be accepted by schools admitted to the scheme. The general result, were the first alternative adopted, would be that, in return for a capitation grant covering fees and maintenance, a percentage of the annual intake of such public boarding schools as accepted, the scheme would consist of pupils of the type in question. How large—an important point—that proportion is to be is not

prominently among the subjects considered by the recently-appointed Committee on Public Schools.

The free place—since 1933 the special place—system has a distinguished history. In its present form it is out of date, since we can now do better; but it has done more, nevertheless, than any other agency to build a bridge from the elementary schools to secondary education. Nine-tenths of the cheaper public schools, the great majority of whose pupils are day-boys, are required to provide special places. How many boarding-schools are in present circumstances needed is a question for consideration; but, on the assumption that some such schools continue to exist, an analogous requirement in the case of those schools, which, with few exceptions, provide at present no special places, may properly be one element in any programme of reform. It is, however, only one element. To see in it a substitute for other equally essential measures would be as unreasonable as it would have been, in the early years of the present century, to regard article 20 of the then secondary school code as rendering superfluous its remaining provisions. Two points, in particular, require to be considered. The first, and most important, is the educational value of the special place system to the boys affected by it. The second relates to the liabilities which it involves for the authorities administering it.

The object of the special place system has been to make secondary education accessible to pupils in the elementary schools whose parents cannot afford the full fees. Its success has been partly due to the fact that it has combined the provision of educational opportunities with the minimum disturbance of the children's normal life. Not only do the holders of special places continue to live at home, but the schools which they enter, though often greatly superior in staffing, equipment and amenities to those which they leave, are largely, and often predominantly, attended by pupils of much the same social background as themselves. Difficulties sometimes arise; but, on the whole, the children concerned enter an environment not too different from their own, play their part in creating the social atmosphere of the school, mix on equal terms with young people some of whom they already know, and normally suffer neither from the sense of inferiority nor the tendency to exaggerated self-assertion, which are apt to be the fate of the boy whose surroundings impress on him that he is a rare exception. It would be rash to suggest that such conditions cannot exist in the case of boys transferred from

stated; but the proposal that "all the independent boarding schools should be made fully accessible" is rejected, on the ground that "it would in effect mean that all admissions to those schools would be controlled by statutory authorities", and the course recommended is an "experimental approach, based on the offers the schools feel able to make and the Board feel able to approve". In addition, it is recommended that, when scholarships are awarded, a maximum fee, varying from school to school, should be fixed by the Board of Education, and that no school should be admitted to the scheme unless it is open to inspection by the Board. It is also stated that the authors of the pamphlet would not "object to the appointment either by the Board or, in the case of local schools, by the Local Authorities of representatives on the Governing Bodies of the Independent Schools, on condition that those representatives did not number more than one-third of the total number of governors in each case."

elementary or grant-aided secondary schools to the more expensive boarding-schools, as the latter today are; but it can hardly be denied that they must be much more difficult of establishment. They are not likely to exist unless the proportion which such boys form of the total in-take is, not a mere trickle, but sufficiently large to enable them to exercise a decisive influence on the character of the schools; unless it is made evident by the treatment of all places as special places that the schools are recruited on the basis of promise, not wealth; unless their living conditions are simplified and cheapened; and unless the composition of their governing bodies is radically changed.

Such reforms are, in any case, desirable; and the fact that they are necessary in order to make a special place policy a success is no argument against it. But clearly they imply a much more drastic interference with the residential public schools than is involved in the mere requirement that they shall admit a certain proportion of pupils from elementary or secondary schools. The truth is that this aspect of the subject has been gratuitously bedevilled by a fog of unconscious cant. It is sometimes implied that the public schools will be "democratised," if, while remaining predominantly academies for young gentlemen, they consent to confer on a few deserving proletarians the inestimable boon of admission to them. To that well-meant, but not always well-thought-out, suggestion more than one answer will be given; it is to be feared that the least impolite will be, "Thank you for nothing." The logic of democracy involves, not the stabilisation of the educational privileges now enjoyed by wealth through their nicely-rationed extension to a few more participants, but their complete abolition. What the nation requires is, not more gentlemen, but more men with sufficient sense not to care whether they and their neighbours are gentlemen or not. If the public schools can help to produce them, the more widely their education is shared the better. If they cannot, they had better keep it to themselves, and leave the civic virtues to less fastidious institutions. The fundamental question, in short, is different from that which is usually posed. It is not how to select sons of common persons who are "capable of profiting" by attendance at a public boarding-school. It is how to modify the atmosphere, outlook, and manner of life of the more expensive boarding-schools in such a way as to make it beneficial for ordinary boys to attend them.

If, therefore, a special place policy is to form a useful part of any programme of reform, it must be formulated in terms a good deal more precise than those employed in the pamphlet, instructive though it is, issued by the Committee of the Headmasters' Conference. In particular, it must satisfy three conditions, of which two are rejected by them and one is accorded a qualified recognition. In the first place, such a policy must not be a substitute for the abolition of tuition-fees recommended, for the reasons given in their Report, by the majority of the Committee on Public Schools. A considerable proportion of boarders are found in schools which are neither boarding-schools nor day-schools, but both at once. To maintain tuition-fees for boarders, while abolishing them for day-boys, would

be a course difficult to justify. In the second place—since, when tuition-fees have been abolished, boarding-charges will remain—the policy must be applied not only, as is sometimes suggested, to a minority of places in the schools concerned, but to all of them. The 100 per cent special place system¹ now in process of adoption, with the approval of the Board, by an increasing number of Education Authorities, does not imply the employment of one method of assessing character and capacity to the exclusion of others. What it does mean is that character and capacity, not money, shall be treated as the sole relevant consideration, and that pupils shall be admitted on the basis of their personal qualities, without regard to the financial resources or social position of their parents. It would clearly be improper for the State to grant public money to institutions giving a preference to the children of parents who happen to have red hair. It should be equally obvious that it is out of the question for it to pay grants to schools which make a principle of according special privileges to wealth, by admitting boys belonging to well-to-do families in preference to boys of greater promise, but less financially fortunate. Abuses of that order are precluded by the use of the 100 per cent special place system, and, given the continuance of boarding-charges, they can be precluded in no other way.² Indeed, when the number of applicants exceeds the number of places available, it is difficult to see how the intention of section 14 (4) of the Education Act, 1921, can be otherwise implemented.³ It may be expedient for practical reasons, that the introduction of the policy should be spread over some years. Its principle, however—the principle that the only relevant criterion of selection is the promise of pupils, not their parents' means—can hardly be contested,⁴ and

¹ The principal objection to it is the investigation into parental incomes involved; and when, as in the case of children sitting for the present special place examination, the numbers concerned are large, that objection is serious. The annual intake of public boarding-schools is so small that, in their case, the difficulty would not be formidable.

² See the *Special Report of the Committees on Public Schools*, section 43, the argument of which is concerned with tuition-fees, but applies equally to other charges: "To preserve", state the majority, "anything less than a 100 per cent Special Place system and so allow a child whose parent was able to pay the full fees any preferential treatment on that account, would be the abnegation of the principle that the child should receive the education best suited to it *without this choice being affected by financial considerations*. We wish, however to stress the principle that the parents' choice, *unhampered by financial considerations*, should be regarded as a most vital element in determining the entries to the various types of schools".

³ The section in question provides that "children and young persons shall not be debarred from receiving the benefits of any form of education by which they are capable of profiting through inability to pay fees". At present, in areas where, e.g., 50 per cent of the places available are awarded to children admitted as a result of the special place examination, and 50 per cent are filled by the children of fee-payers, it may (and does) happen that some of the latter are inferior in capacity to some of the children who fail to win a special place. When that occurs, a child, "capable of profiting" by secondary education, is debarred from obtaining it "through inability to pay fees". If the same system were introduced into public schools it would, other things being equal, produce the same result.

⁴ The Committee of the Headmasters' Conference object to the suggestion that the public schools should be made "fully accessible", for the reason, among others, that it would have the effect of "depriving parents of the right of choosing

that principle, if applied by stages, should be accepted forthwith. In the third place, it is necessary that the schools concerned should be open to inspection, and that their Governing Bodies should include a majority of Governors nominated by the Board and either by Local Education Authorities or by the national associations representing them. To bring the public boarding-schools into closer relations with the public educational system would be an advantage to both.

The administrative aspects of a special place policy require also to be considered. The problem of the age of admission is one, though not the most important, of them. Grant-aided secondary schools admit the majority of entrants between eleven and twelve; public boarding-schools, between thirteen and fourteen. Various expedients have been suggested for bridging the gap. Public schools could establish preparatory or junior departments, as some already have, in which case they would receive boys from schools in the public educational system at the end of the primary stage; or they could admit boys from secondary schools between thirteen and fourteen; or they could make the normal age of admission eleven *plus*, and reserve certain places for boys entering later from preparatory schools. It is possible, though not certain, that, given cooperation between the public boarding-schools and the Local Education Authorities—a condition not yet realised—this difficulty could be overcome. The effect on the secondary schools of the diversion or withdrawal of their ablest pupils is more difficult to determine. The number of pupils in independent schools, boarding and day, is 26,500. The number of boys in grant-aided secondary schools (some of which are also public schools) was in 1938, 247,389. It is possible that, in view of those figures, the secondary schools would not be so seriously affected by the process of "creaming" as is sometimes suggested. But, of course, any change which caused those schools to be regarded as a second-best would be a grave misfortune.

The problems arising on the side of finance will not be negligible.

a school for their children." That objection, unless the writer misunderstands it, does not seem to be well founded. The introduction of a 100 per cent special place system, *plus* the abolition of tuition-fees,—if that is what is meant by "fully accessible"—would not result in any net diminution in the exercise by parents of their free choice of schools. Some parents would find that they could not buy entrance into a public boarding-school for a boy who failed to win a special place; and in that sense, no doubt, their discretion would be diminished. Other parents, and a much larger number, would find for the first time that their sons could enter a public boarding-school, if they showed the required promise. To describe such a change as "depriving parents of the right of choosing a school for their children" seems—to speak with moderation—somewhat paradoxical. Is there a "right" on the part of well-to-do parents to secure the admission of their sons to public boarding-schools in preference to equally able, or more able, sons of parents of small means? If no such right exists, what right would be infringed by the requirement that admission shall be based on the promise of candidates, not on their means? In reality, were tuition-fees abolished, and a 100 per cent special place system introduced, freedom of choice would be increased for all parents except the small minority who can afford at present to pay boarding school costs, and whose sons are unable to win a special place at the school preferred by them. The views of the majority of the Committee on Public Schools as to the effect of a 100 per cent. special place system in facilitating freedom of choice by parents appear to agree with those here expressed.

The average boarding-fee of the cheapest group of public schools was, in 1938, £82-£83; that of the more expensive £121-£122, that of the thirty-seven aristocrats of the system £169-£170, while the fees charged by particular schools in the last group ran up to £250 or more. The average cost of a free place in a grant-aided secondary day-school was, on the eve of the war, in the region of £28 16s.¹ The difference² is somewhat formidable. It means that the average expenditure required to educate one boy at one of the least expensive boarding-schools would educate between two and three boys at a day-school, and that between five and six boys could be educated at a day-school for one boy educated at a boarding-school in the most expensive group. That consideration is not, of course, decisive; but the disparity of costs, even if reduced by the abolition of tuition fees, must be taken into account in planning the development of secondary education. It raises certain further issues. If the whole cost of special places at boarding-schools is to fall on the schools themselves, public authorities are not directly affected by it; but, in that case, since few schools have large endowments, the numbers of special placers admitted is likely to be small. If, on the other hand, the costs of special places at such schools are to be defrayed in the same way as are the costs of those at grant-aided secondary schools, by Local Education Authorities and the Board, it will be necessary for these bodies to satisfy themselves that the costs of a school place are not needlessly inflated, as some head masters have alleged that they are.³ "The public schools," remarks one them, desire that their education "should be available to as large a number of boys as possible. If this is to be done, the nation will have to spend money; but it should not be asked to spend more money than necessary."⁴ That view is likely to command general assent. What precisely it involves is a matter for consideration; but it points to, at any rate, the public control of costs at boarding-schools, and to the adequate representation of public authorities on their governing bodies. Here, again, therefore, the extension of the special place system to those schools will necessarily lead to certain further changes. It ought not, in short, to be introduced as an isolated measure, but only as part of a more general scheme of reform.

V.—SUGGESTION FOR A POLICY.

"There seems to be general agreement," wrote two years ago Mr. Salter Davies, "that the public schools should open their doors to a certain number of free place scholars from the elementary schools. This would be a useful beginning, but it provides no real solution. It would be a fatal mistake to rest content with first-aid

¹ The figure is for the year 1936-37.

² The difference is partly, but not wholly, due to boarding charges; "in our experience it is the cost of tuition, and the maintenance of buildings, sometimes laid out on an old-fashioned and uneconomical plan, and not of boarding, that is the chief contributing factor to the high fee". (*Public Schools and the Future*, pp. 18-19).

³ *Journal of Education*, November, 1940, "The Public Schools and the Nation," by Hugh Elder, and "The Future of the Public Schools," by W. F. Bushell.

⁴ *Ibid.* Hugh Elder, *loc. cit.*

treatment when a major operation is needed. . . . The public schools must become public in fact, and not merely in name.¹ The recent report of the Association of Education Committees, which rejects a special place policy as futile in the absence of "the full acceptance by the independent schools of those principles of equality of educational opportunity which the Association believe to be fundamental," says, in effect, the same. What is the nature of "the major operation" required? What must be done if the public schools are to become "public in fact"? The proposals made below suggest some tentative answers to those questions.

I.—Independent Schools: general provisions.

It is essential that all independent schools, whether private schools or public schools, should be brought under public supervision. They should be required, as recommended by the Association of Directors and Secretaries for Education,² to hold a certificate from the Board of Education, to be granted, in the case of local schools, after consultation with the Local Education Authority. The condition of granting such a certificate would be that the schools were open to inspection, and that they complied with such requirements as the Board may lay down.

The effect of this proposal would be (1) that some 10,000³ private schools, with perhaps 350,000 to 400,000 pupils, of which little is at present known, would be brought under the review of the Board and the Local Education Authorities. Some of them, possibly many of them, would be refused a certificate, and would cease to exist. Some of them would continue, but on conditions approved by the Board and the Local Education Authorities; (2) that public schools, whether day-schools or boarding-schools, not at present in receipt of grants, would be required to hold a certificate, to comply with the Board's requirements, and to be inspected. Such schools numbered sixty-six in 1938. The majority of them are predominantly boarding-schools, thirty-four with fees of £150 and over, and twenty-seven with fees of £100-£149.

¹ *Journal of Education*, November, 1940, leading article.

² *Education: a Plan for the Future*, pp. 14-15. The Report on educational reconstruction prepared for the Association of Education Committees also recommends "the licensing and effective supervision on behalf of the State of all private schools." The White Paper on *Educational Reconstruction*, section 110, proposes, (1) that all independent schools shall be open to inspection, by the Board, (2) that a register of such schools shall be kept by it, (3) that "the schools which are considered by the Board to be open to objection because the premises are unsuitable, the accommodation inadequate, the instruction inefficient, or the proprietor or a member of the teaching staff not a fit person to have the charge of the children, will not be allowed to continue unless the defects complained of are remedied within a specified period", subject to the right of the proprietor of a condemned school to appeal to an independent tribunal. This proposal is a step in the right direction, but, unless inspection is frequent and strict, not a long one. The children would be surer of protection if (1) every independent school were required, as a condition of its continuance, to hold a certificate from the Board (2) the certificate was granted for a limited period, at the end of which it could be renewed or withdrawn.

³ Report of Departmental Committee on Independent Schools (1932), p. 21.

II.—Public Day-Schools.

The majority of public schools which are predominantly day-schools are already in receipt of grant, and must comply with the Board's Secondary Regulations. Their future depends, therefore, on the general policy of the country with regard to secondary education. Fees at secondary schools should, of course, be abolished, as recommended in the Majority Report of the Fleming Committee, and all pupils should be admitted on the basis of the same test. Governing bodies should be required to include a majority of representative governors, appointed partly by Local Education Authorities or the Associations representing them, partly by the Board. When these reforms have been carried out they will automatically apply to the day public schools receiving grant, in the same way as to other grant-aided schools. The only point which calls for special notice arises from the fact that the majority of the former are "direct grant" schools. These schools number 232, and most of them now receive, in addition to the Board's grant, some financial assistance from Local Education Authorities. Their position represents a concession accorded them in the past, when a public system of secondary education was in its infancy. There may be special circumstances in which it is still justified; but, now that experience has shown that Local Education Authorities can be responsible for secondary schools without, except in rare cases, impairing their liberty, interfering with their teachers, inflicting party politics upon them, or otherwise injuring their *moral*, the arguments once advanced for that exceptional status have lost much of their validity. While, however, the present list, which dates from 1926, can hardly be justified, it may well be true that the existence of some direct grant Schools represents an additional element of variety in secondary education which is not without value. The course recommended by the majority of the Fleming Committee appears to be a reasonable one. Schools forming, like many such schools, an essential part of the local secondary provision should be brought within the Local Authority system, while those which are, for one reason or another, something more than local schools should continue to receive grant direct from the Board. The proposals made above as to the abolition of tuition-fees and the constitution of Governing Bodies should apply in both cases.

III.—Public Boarding-Schools.

(1) There is nothing novel in the provision of State-aid for public day-schools. The only question which arises in their case—namely, that of the conditions on which aid is to be given—is one common to all schools on the grant-list. The public schools which cater predominantly for boarders are in a different position. A few of these also receive grant, but the great majority do not. The latter include all the more expensive schools, with fees of £150 and upwards.

The suggestion now made that the State should aid these schools is sometimes discussed in general terms, as though it involved financial assistance to all public boarding-schools desiring it and willing

to comply with certain minimum requirements. Such a policy of indiscriminate assistance would be an error. In the first place, even if it is agreed that some boarding-schools ought to have a place within the national system of education, it is necessary to decide the number of such schools which, under present conditions, is required. In the second place, public boarding-schools, like other schools, vary widely in quality, and there is no reason to think that all of them are equally worth preserving. In the third place, the residential education which is the distinctive feature of the boarding-school need not necessarily aim at the same objects, or cover the same span of life, as are usual at present, and it is important to define the particular purposes to be served by the boarding-schools which it is decided to maintain. The first essential, therefore, is an investigation to determine (a) how many boarding-schools it is expedient to maintain in existence, (b) what schools are to be included in that number, (c) what special functions such schools are to perform. Until the results of such an inquiry are available, no offer of financial assistance to boarding-schools not already in receipt of it should be made.

(2) If it is desired to make the public schools accessible to boys of small means, the most effective and economical method of doing so is obvious. It is to increase the number of day-boys. Two steps, it is suggested, ought to be considered. The first is to convert—sometimes to re-convert—into day-schools those boarding-schools which are situated in areas sufficiently populous to ensure them an adequate local *clientèle*. The second is to require those boarding-schools which, owing to the absence of that condition, must continue to cater predominantly for boarders to admit as large a proportion of day-boys as local circumstances allow.

The scale on which the first policy can be applied must obviously depend partly on the decision reached as to the number of residential schools required. On the view sometimes heard that a large and immediate increase in the number of boarding-schools is to be desired, there is clearly nothing to be said for reducing the number of such schools already in existence. If, on the other hand, it is thought that, at the present stage in the history of English secondary education, an increase in the number of good day-schools is the thing most required, the proposal will be regarded differently. Not only is it the simplest method of establishing equality of access to public schools, but it meets a demand which before the war was growing. In the difficult years following 1931, the tide which for long had run in favour of boarding-schools turned, and flowed for a time in the opposite direction.¹ No one can say whether, on the return of peace, the economic situation will be such as to cause that movement to be resumed. It is to be expected, however, that one effect of the programme of educational reconstruction advanced by the Government, with its plans for a universal system of secondary education, will be a serious shortage of secondary school places. The contribution which converted boarding-schools could make to meeting that need would not, in any case, be large, since few boarding-schools are situated in densely populated areas; but it should be welcomed.

¹ For facts see Leybourne and White, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-11.

none-the-less, for what it is worth. Higher secondary education ought not to be concentrated in a few great centres, but to be widely diffused. Nothing would do more to heighten the intellectual vitality of English life, and to stimulate a healthy pride in local educational achievements, than the existence, not only in a few great cities, but in all considerable towns, of more day-schools resembling the best of those now in existence. There is no reason, of course, why some boarders should not be admitted to such schools; but the object of the step proposed would be to substitute day-schools, with a minority of boarders, for boarding-schools, with a minority of day-boys. The second policy—the admission to schools which are predominantly residential of a greatly increased number of day-boys—has been strongly urged by eminent head masters.¹ It is to be supported on condition—and only on condition—that the day-boys are sufficiently numerous not to be damned with a tepid toleration, but to enter fully into the life of the school, and to play an equal part with the boarders in determining its character.

If these reforms are to be carried through on an adequate scale and in a reasonable period, it must not be left to individual schools to initiate them, or not, as they think fit. They must become part of the educational policy of the nation. The Board should make a survey of existing residential schools, in order to ascertain the practicability of acting on these proposals in particular cases. It should then determine (*a*) which of these schools can with advantage be converted into day-schools, (*b*) what proportion of day-boys boarding-schools not so converted shall be required to admit. The schools in the first category would be subject to the secondary regulations of the Board. The schools in the second should be treated in the manner suggested in the following section.

(3) The policy suggested above would somewhat increase the number of day-schools. There would still remain, however, a small group of schools some of which possibly could and should admit a larger number of day-boys, but which, being situated in sparsely-populated areas, would continue to be predominantly boarding-schools. It is these schools, some of them highly expensive and exclusive, which occur to the minds of most hearers when the public schools are mentioned.

The distinctive peculiarity of these schools is their residential character. It is a curious feature of the recent discussion of the public schools that the question of the special educational rôle of residence, as distinct from day attendance, has received little detailed examination. The defenders of boarding-schools appear to take it for granted that, if it is good for a boy to go to a boarding-school at all, it is necessarily good for him to remain there, as commonly to-day, for four to five years. The critics of the boarding-schools similarly seem to assume that, if they disapprove of that arrangement, they are thereby committed to denying that residence away from home can play under any conditions whatever a useful part in secondary education. Neither attitude is reasonable. Some boarding-schools of the existing type will, in any case, continue to be required for boys

¹ E.g. by Sir Frank Fletcher, in the *Journal of Education*, September, 1940.

in special circumstances, for example for the sons of parents living abroad or in some region of England where a good day-school is inaccessible. Not only so, but it may well be the case that there is a future before boarding-schools receiving pupils for much the same period as is usual now, on the ground that the continuous and intensive cultivation which they offer is a useful addition to the nation's educational resources. The advantages of residential education are often, it is true, overstated by those administering it; but the latter are not alone in thinking that there is nothing like leather. What is mischievous to a degree which can hardly be exaggerated is, not that type of education, but its restriction to a minority selected on grounds of income. Provided that the schools concerned are recruited solely on the basis of the promise shown by candidates for admission, irrespective of parental means, and that the constitution of their Governing Bodies is of a kind to command public confidence —provided, in short, that the whole silly and degrading business of class privileges and class loyalties in education is knocked on the head for good—there is no reason why some boarding-schools, like other secondary schools, should not be aided by the State.

Whatever may be the future of schools catering solely or predominantly for boarders, the majority of boys and girls over eleven are likely, if the government's programme is carried through, to be found, for many years to come, in secondary day-schools. It is the improvement of those schools, grammar, modern and technical alike, which is the most urgent task. Residential and day education ought not, however, to be mutually exclusive alternatives. They should be regarded, not as antithetic, but as complementary, to each other; and it is quite possible to believe that boarding-schools have a valuable contribution to make, while holding, with the Association of Education Committees, that many or most of them would make it most effectively if, instead of offering four or five years residential education for a small minority of boys, they offered it for a shorter period to a larger number. The long suit of such education is the opportunities which it supplies for community life. If those opportunities are beneficial to some boys, something on the same lines would probably be beneficial to a far larger number. The most useful function of many of the residential schools of the future may be found in providing them. It would be a valuable asset, for example, to a group of urban secondary schools to have attached to it a rural boarding-school, to which it could send parties of boys for a term at a time. The future of some boarding-schools may consist, as Mr. Simpson¹ has suggested, in being used for that purpose; that of others in offering a secondary education closely related to the life and work of a rural society; that of others again in supplying facilities for an advanced secondary education to boys who have attended secondary schools where such facilities are not fully available. What is needed, in short, is to cease to take for granted the routine inherited from the nineteenth century, and to consider the distinctive functions of the boarding-school in the light of the novel conditions of to-day.

Such possibilities ought to receive more consideration than has

¹ J. H. Simpson, *The Future of the Public Schools*.

hitherto been given them. They would mean, if translated into practice, that a large proportion of the residential schools of the future, instead of providing the whole secondary education of a small minority of well-to-do doys, would meet the needs of one stage in the education of a greater number, and ultimately, perhaps, if the new departure proved a success, of the majority. Like most educational reforms, proposals of the kind will continue, no doubt, to be dismissed as moonshine, until they come to be acted on, when the schools planned in accordance with them will be described as institutions peculiarly characteristic of the British genius, each blessed with a distinctive tradition of immemorial antiquity, and all offering unique opportunities for the training of character and education for leadership. In the meantime, it is necessary, in view of the suggestion that the public boarding-schools should receive financial aid from the State, to consider what other changes in their position are required. The following measures would be a step in the right direction:

(a) All non-local boarding-schools should be brought under public supervision, in the manner suggested in I above.

(b) The governing bodies of such schools should be constituted in a manner to be laid down by the Board, and should include a majority of governors consisting of representatives of Local Education Authorities nominated by national organisations, such as the Association of Education Committees and the County Councils Association, together with representatives of other social and educational interests appointed by the Board.

(c) The financial arrangements of such schools, including tuition fees, unless abolished—as they should be—boarding-house charges, the administration of endowments (if any) and similar matters, should be under the supervision of the Board. Some headmasters have expressed the view that the costs of boarding-schools are sometimes at present unnecessarily high. It should be the duty of the Board to examine living costs, and, where practicable, to reduce them. The idea to be aimed at is the maximum simplification of living conditions which is compatible with health and efficiency.

(d) Were those changes effected, the criticisms made above on a special place policy, though valid as long as that policy stands by itself, would lose part of their force. But the mere infiltration into public boarding-schools of a small minority of pupils from elementary and secondary schools would still remain of little value. Such boys should enter in substantial numbers, or not enter at all. All places should be special places. Selection for admission should be made by committees representing, in addition to the boarding-schools concerned, the public teaching profession and the Local Education Authorities.

VI.—Conclusion.

Such proposals will, of course, be denounced as revealing a totalitarian contempt for educational freedom. If educational freedom requires that a small group of relatively well-to-do families shall be entitled, in virtue of their incomes, to monopolise the use of one group of educational institutions, and that the authorities controlling

them shall be under no obligation to consider, in planning their arrangements, the needs of the majority who are differently circumstanced, the criticism is justified. The writer does not share that opinion. He regards the prevalent practice of recruiting the more expensive public schools predominantly from a single class, not only as an injustice to the young people excluded, but as injurious to the pupils educated in those schools, as well as to society. It is between these two views that a choice must be made.

The fundamental issue is simple. It is whether the existence of a group of schools reserved for the children of the comparatively prosperous, and in a large measure isolated from the public system of education, is or is not, as the world is today, in the best interests of the nation. It cannot be decided by the venerable device of describing privileges as liberties. Educational freedom, like other kinds of freedom, does not consist in the right of every individual to use such economic advantages as he may happen to possess in order to secure special opportunities for himself and his children, or in the unfettered discretion of those who control educational resources to employ them, if they think fit, to gratify that natural, but anti-social, egotism. It is a reality in so far as, and only in so far as, education is organised in such a manner as to enable all, whatever their economic circumstances, to make the most of the powers with which they are endowed. No single group of institutions can make more than a small contribution to that end. It is none the less its duty, and should be its pride, to contribute to it what it can. The England of the next twenty years will not be a nest of singing-birds. Those who guide the nation's schools can do more than is given to most men to create the common culture which at present we lack. To serve educational needs, without regard to the vulgar irrelevancies of class and income, is part of the teacher's honour. Schools claiming to represent the best that English secondary education has to show should be the first to offer an example of that spirit.

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